

Commentaries on the Vice President's trip to Europe are on the increase in the West European press along with reports of confusion within the Kohl government on the zero option. The USSR confines itself to repeating arguments aired over the past few days.

UK

Monday's Financial Times says that the trip of Vice President Bush to Europe has "every chance of being a mistake, perhaps a major mistake...There is little for Mr. Bush to say that does good, and anything said publicly that fails to do good runs a serious risk of doing harm to the political cohesion of the Alliance." The article concludes that the Vice President "must find something new to say to show that the US is reasonable, constructive and, above all, flexible, but without actually departing from the existing NATO position."

Germany

The Kohl government is still trying to explain away Strauss's condemnation of the zero option. Public statements yesterday by Kohl, Defense Minister Woerner and CDU/CSU floor leader Alfred Dregger indicate attempts by Bonn to define its position. Reaffirming support for the zero option, Kohl echoed Genscher's earlier statement that "all or nothing would not be a good policy." Woerner reportedly insists that the zero option ignores the conventional imbalance in Europe and that its implementation actually would increase the prospects for a military conflict. Dregger is quoted as saying that the West would "under certain conditions make do with a second best solution." Kohl, in a West German newspaper interview appearing today, says he expects a "compromise" in Geneva on something other than the zero-option level. Meanwhile, former Chancellor Brandt yesterday repeated the SPD position that "factors had changed" since the 1979 NATO decision and implied that the US and USSR are no longer interested in reaching an agreement at Geneva. Brandt also emphasized that an SDP government would do all possible to make deployment "unnecessary."

France

The current Newsweek survey of European views on disarmament topics received wide coverage in the French press with several commentators citing Vice President Bush's upcoming visit as an example of new efforts by the US to restore West European confidence in the Reagan administration's arms control objectives. The influential weekly Le Point warned that any split in the Alliance over INF risks accelerating what the French view as a growing trend toward isolationism in the US.

Italy

Italian press highlights include Colombo's statement after Monday's EC Foreign Ministers' meeting that the Ten are in accord with the US position and reflections on the trip to Europe of Vice President Bush. The conservative Il Giornale, referring to the Vice President's interview with James Reston, noted that the purpose of the trip was "not to negotiate with the Allies but to increase mutual understanding." The leftist La Repubblica surmised that "Bush is coming to Europe to spur the Allies to deploy the Pershings and the cruises."

USSR

TASS argued Monday in an English language piece that it is the Reagan Administration--not the USSR--that is "sowing discord" in NATO. The article was followed yesterday by a signed Pravda article, again aimed at European public opinion, which calls on the US to adopt a "realistic" approach at the INF talks. A TASS piece yesterday misrepresented Paul Nitze's remarks made on his departure for Geneva.